THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Written February-May 1914
Published in April-June 1914
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Signed: *V. Ilyin*

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Clause 9 of the Russian Marxists' Programme, which deals with the right of nations to self-determination, has (as we have already pointed out in *Prosveshcheniye*)* given rise lately to a crusade on the part of the opportunists. The Russian liquidator Semkovsky, in the St. Petersburg liquidationist newspaper, and the Bundist Liebman and the Ukrainian nationalist-socialist Yurkevich in their respective periodicals have violently attacked this clause and treated it with supreme contempt. There is no doubt that this campaign of a motley array of opportunists against our Marxist Programme is closely connected with present-day nationalist vacillations in general. Hence we consider a detailed examination of this question timely. We would mention, in passing, that none of the opportunists named above has offered a single argument of his own; they all merely repeat what Rosa Luxemburg said in her lengthy Polish article of 1908-09, "The National Question and Autonomy". In our exposition we shall deal mainly with the "original" arguments of this last-named author.

1. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS?

Naturally, this is the first question that arises when any attempt is made at a Marxist examination of what is known as self-determination. What should be understood by that term? Should the answer be sought in legal definitions deduced from all sorts of "general concepts" of law? Or is it rather to be sought in a historico-economic study of the national movements?

It is not surprising that the Semkovskys, Liebmans and Yurkeviches did not even think of raising this question,

* See pp. 17-51 of this volume.—*Ed.*

and shrugged it off by scoffing at the "obscurity" of the Marxist Programme, apparently unaware, in their simplicity, that the self-determination of nations is dealt with, not only in the Russian Programme of 1903, but in the resolution of the London International Congress of 1896 (with which I shall deal in detail in the proper place). Far more surprising is the fact that Rosa Luxemburg, who declaims a great deal about the supposedly abstract and metaphysical nature of the clause in question, should herself succumb to the sin of abstraction and metaphysics. It is Rosa Luxemburg herself who is continually lapsing into generalities about self-determination (to the extent even of philosophising amusingly on the question of how the will of the nation is to be ascertained), without anywhere clearly and precisely asking herself whether the gist of the matter lies in legal definitions or in the experience of the national movements throughout the world.

A precise formulation of this question, which no Marxist can avoid, would at once destroy nine-tenths of Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. This is not the first time that national movements have arisen in Russia, nor are they peculiar to that country alone. Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of *national states*, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The

most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is *typical* and normal for the capitalist period.

Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or "inventing" abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.

Later on we shall see still other reasons why it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state. At present, we must deal with Rosa Luxemburg's efforts to "dismiss" the inescapable conclusion that profound economic factors underlie the urge-towards a national state.

Rosa Luxemburg is quite familiar with Kautsky's pamphlet *Nationality and Internationality*. (Supplement to *Die Neue Zeit*[178] No. 1, 1907-08; Russian translation in the journal *Nauchnaya Mysl*,[179] Riga, 1908.) She is aware that, after carefully analysing the question of the national state in §4 of that pamphlet, Kautsky arrived at the conclusion that Otto Bauer "*underestimates* the strength of the urge towards a national state" (p. 23 of the pamphlet). Rosa Luxemburg herself quotes the following words of Kautsky's: "The national state is the form *most suited* to present-day conditions, [i.e., capitalist, civilised, economically progressive conditions, as distinguished from medieval, precapitalist, etc.]; it is the form in which the state can best fulfil its tasks" (i.e., the tasks of securing the freest, widest and speediest development of capitalism). To this we must add Kautsky's still more precise concluding remark that states of mixed national composition (known as multinational states, as distinct from national states) are "always those whose internal constitution has for some reason or other remained abnormal or underdeveloped" (backward). Needless to say, Kautsky speaks of abnormality exclusively in the sense of lack of conformity with what is best adapted to the requirements of a developing capitalism.

The question now is: How did Rosa Luxemburg treat these historico-economic conclusions of Kautsky's? Are they right or wrong? Is Kautsky right in his historico-economic theory, or is Bauer, whose theory is basically psychological? What is the connection between Bauer's undoubted "national opportunism", his defence of cultural-national autonomy, his nationalistic infatuation ("an occasional emphasis on the national aspect", as Kautsky put it), his "enormous exaggeration of the national aspect and complete neglect of the international aspect" (Kautsky)—and his underestimation of the strength of the urge to create a national state?

Rosa Luxemburg has not even raised this question. She has not noticed the connection. She has not considered the *sum total* of Bauer's theoretical views. She has not even drawn a line between the historico-economic and the psychological theories of the national question. She confines herself to the following remarks in criticism of Kautsky:

> "This 'best' national state is only an abstraction, which can easily be developed and defended theoretically, but which does not correspond to reality." (*Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, 1908, No. 6, p. 499.)

And in corroboration of this emphatic statement there follow arguments to the effect that the "right to self-determination" of small nations is made illusory by the development of the great capitalist powers and by imperialism. "Can one seriously speak," Rosa Luxemburg exclaims, "about the 'self-determination' of the formally independent Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Greeks, partly even the Swiss, whose independence is itself a result of the political struggle and the diplomatic game of the 'concert of Europe'?!" (P. 500.) The state that best suits these conditions is "not a national state, as Kautsky believes, but a predatory one". Some dozens of figures are quoted relating to the size of British, French and other colonial possessions.

After reading such arguments, one cannot help marvelling at the author's ability to misunderstand *the how and the why of things*. To teach Kautsky, with a serious mien, that small states are economically dependent on big ones, that a struggle is raging among the bourgeois states for the predatory suppression of other nations, and that imperialism

and colonies exist—all this is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever, for none of this has the slightest bearing on the subject. Not only small states, but even Russia, for example, is entirely dependent, economically, on the power of the imperialist finance capital of the "rich" bourgeois countries. Not only the miniature Balkan states, but even nineteenth-century America was, economically, a colony of Europe, as Marx pointed out in *Capital*.[180] Kautsky, like any Marxist, is, of course, well aware of this, but that has nothing whatever to do with the question of national movements and the national state.

For the question of the political self-determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic independence. This is just as intelligent as if someone, in discussing the programmatic demand for the supremacy of parliament, i.e., the assembly of people's representatives, in a bourgeois state, were to expound the perfectly correct conviction that big capital dominates in a bourgeois country, whatever the regime in it.

There is no doubt that the greater part of Asia, the most densely populated continent, consists either of colonies of the "Great Powers", or of states that are extremely dependent and oppressed as nations. But does this commonly-known circumstance in any way shake the undoubted fact that in Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production and the freest, widest and speediest growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state? The latter is a bourgeois state, and for that reason has itself begun to oppress other nations and to enslave colonies. We cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national states, like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact that capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia; that it is such states that ensure the best conditions for the development of capitalism. The example of Asia speaks *in favour* of Kautsky and *against* Rosa Luxemburg.

The example of the Balkan states likewise contradicts her, for anyone can now see that the best conditions for the development of capitalism in the Balkans are created precisely in proportion to the creation of independent national states in that peninsula.

Therefore, Rosa Luxemburg notwithstanding, the example of the whole of progressive and civilised mankind, the example of the Balkans and that of Asia prove that Kautsky's proposition is absolutely correct: the national state is the rule and the "norm" of capitalism; the multinational state represents backwardness, or is an exception. From the standpoint of national relations, the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the national state. This does not mean, of course, that such a state, which is based on bourgeois relations, can eliminate the exploitation and oppression of nations. It only means that Marxists cannot lose sight of the powerful *economic* factors that give rise to the urge to create national states. It means that "self-determination of nations" in the Marxists' Programme *cannot*, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state.

The conditions under which the bourgeois-democratic demand for a "national state" should be supported from a Marxist, i.e., class-proletarian, point of view will be dealt with in detail below. For the present, we shall confine ourselves to the definition of the *concept* of "self-determination", and only note that Rosa Luxemburg *knows* what this concept means ("national state"), whereas her opportunist partisans, the Liebmans, the Semkovskys, the Yurkeviches, *do not even know that*!

2. THE HISTORICALLY CONCRETE PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION

The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within *definite* historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country (e.g., the national programme for a given country), that account be taken of the specific features

distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch.

What does this categorical requirement of Marxism imply in its application to the question under discussion?

First of all, it implies that a clear distinction must be drawn between the two periods of capitalism, which differ radically from each other as far as the national movement is concerned. On the one hand, there is the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, the period of the formation of the bourgeois-democratic society and state, when the national movements for the first time become mass movements and in one way or another draw *all* classes of the population into politics through the press, participation in representative institutions, etc. On the other hand, there is the period of fully formed capitalist states with a long-established constitutional regime and a highly developed antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—a period that may be called the eve of capitalism's downfall.

The typical features of the first period are: the awakening of national movements and the drawing of the peasants, the most numerous and the most sluggish section of the population, into these movements, in connection with the struggle for political liberty in general, and for the rights of the nation in particular. Typical features of the second period are: the absence of mass bourgeois-democratic movements and the fact that developed capitalism, in bringing closer together nations that have already been fully drawn into commercial intercourse, and causing them to intermingle to an increasing degree, brings the antagonism between internationally united capital and the international working-class movement into the forefront.

Of course, the two periods are not walled off from each other; they are connected by numerous transitional links, the various countries differing from each other in the rapidity of their national development, in the national make-up and distribution of their population, and so on. There can be no question of the Marxists of any country drawing up their national programme without taking into account all these general historical and concrete state conditions.

It is here that we come up against the weakest point in Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. With extraordinary zeal, she embellishes her article with a collection of hard words directed against §9 of our Programme, which she declares to be "sweeping", "a platitude", "a metaphysical phrase", and so on without end. It would be natural to expect an author who so admirably condemns metaphysics (in the Marxist sense, i.e., anti-dialectics) and empty abstractions to set us an example of how to make a concrete historical analysis of the question. The question at issue is the national programme of the Marxists of a definite country—Russia, in a definite period—the beginning of the twentieth century. But does Rosa Luxemburg raise the question as to *what historical* period Russia is passing through, or *what are the concrete* features of the national question and the national movements of that *particular* country in that *particular* period?

No, she does not! *She says absolutely nothing about it*! In her work you will not find even the shadow of an analysis of how the national question stands in *Russia* in the present historical period, or of the specific features of *Russia* in this particular respect!

We are told that the national question in the Balkans is presented differently from that in Ireland; that Marx appraised the Polish and Czech national movements in the concrete conditions of 1848 in such and such a way (a page of excerpts from Marx); that Engels appraised the struggle of the forest cantons of Switzerland against Austria and the Battle of Morgarten which took place in 1315 in such and such a way (a page of quotations from Engels with the appropriate comments from Kautsky), that Lassalle regarded the peasant war in Germany of the sixteenth century as reactionary, etc.

It cannot be said that these remarks and quotations have any novelty about them, but at all events it is interesting for the reader to be occasionally reminded just how Marx, Engels and Lassalle approached the analysis of concrete historical problems in individual countries. And a perusal of these instructive quotations from Marx and Engels reveals most strikingly the ridiculous position Rosa Luxemburg has placed herself in. She preaches eloquently and

angrily the need for a concrete historical analysis of the national question in different countries at different times, but she *does not make the least* attempt to determine *what* historical stage in the development of capitalism *Russia* is passing through at the beginning of the twentieth century, or what the *specific features* of the national question in this country are. Rosa Luxemburg gives examples of how *others* have treated the question in a Marxist fashion, as if deliberately stressing how often the road to hell is paved with good intentions and how often good counsel covers up unwillingness or inability to follow such advice in practice.

Here is one of her edifying comparisons. In protesting against the demand for the independence of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg refers to a pamphlet she wrote in 1898, proving the rapid "industrial development of Poland", with the latter's manufactured goods being marketed in Russia. Needless to say, no conclusion whatever can be drawn from this on the question of the *right* to self-determination; it only proves the disappearance of the old Poland of the landed gentry, etc. But Rosa Luxemburg always passes on imperceptibly to the conclusion that among the factors that unite Russia and Poland, the purely economic factors of modern capitalist relations now predominate.

Then our Rosa proceeds to the question of autonomy, and though her article is entitled "The National Question and Autonomy" *in general*, she begins to argue that the Kingdom of Poland has an *exclusive* right to autonomy (see *Prosveshcheniye*, 1913, No. 12*). To support Poland's right to autonomy, Rosa Luxemburg evidently judges the state system of Russia by her economic, political and sociological characteristics and everyday life—a totality of features which, taken together, produce the concept of "Asiatic despotism". (*Przegląd* No. 12, p. 137.)

It is generally known that this kind of state system possesses great stability whenever completely patriarchal and pre-capitalist features predominate in the economic system and where commodity production and class differentiation are scarcely developed. However, if in a country

* See pp. 45-51 of this volume.—*Ed.*

whose state system is distinctly *pre*-capitalist in character there exists a nationally demarcated region where capitalism is *rapidly* developing, then the more rapidly that capitalism develops, the greater will be the antagonism between it and the *pre*-capitalist state system, and the more likely will be the separation of the progressive region from the whole—with which it is connected, not by "modern capitalistic", but by "Asiatically despotic" ties.

Thus, Rosa Luxemburg does not get her arguments to hang together even on the question of the social structure of the government in Russia with regard to bourgeois Poland; as for the concrete, historical, specific features of the national movements in Russia—she does not even raise that question.

That is a point we must now deal with.

3. THE CONCRETE FEATURES OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN RUSSIA, AND RUSSIA'S BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC REFORMATION

"Despite the elasticity of the principle of 'the right of nations to self-determination', which is a mere platitude, and, obviously, equally applicable, not only to the nations inhabiting Russia, but also to the nations inhabiting Germany and Austria, Switzerland and Sweden, America and Australia, we do not find it in the programmes of any of the present-day socialist parties...." (*Przegląd* No. 6, p. 483.)

This is how Rosa Luxemburg opens her attack upon §9 of the Marxist programme. In trying to foist on us the conception that this clause in the programme is a "mere platitude", Rosa Luxemburg herself falls victim to this error, alleging with amusing boldness that this point is, "obviously, equally applicable" to Russia, Germany, etc.

Obviously, we shall reply, Rosa Luxemburg has decided to make her article a collection of errors in logic that could be used for schoolboy exercises. For Rosa Luxemburg's tirade is sheer nonsense and a mockery of the historically concrete presentation of the question.

If one interprets the Marxist programme in Marxist fashion, not in a childish way, one will without difficulty grasp the fact that it refers to bourgeois-democratic national movements. That being the case, it is "obvious" that this

programme "sweepingly", and as a "mere platitude", etc., covers *all* instances of bourgeois-democratic national movements. No less obvious to Rosa Luxemburg, if she gave the slightest thought to it, is the conclusion that our programme refers *only* to cases where such a movement is actually in existence.

Had she given thought to these obvious considerations, Rosa Luxemburg would have easily perceived what nonsense she was talking. In accusing *us* of uttering a "platitude" she has used *against us* the argument that no mention is made of the right to self-determination in the programmes of countries where there are *no* bourgeois-democratic national movements. A remarkably clever argument!

A comparison of the political and economic development of various countries, as well as of their Marxist programmes, is of tremendous importance from the standpoint of Marxism, for there can be no doubt that all modern states are of a common capitalist nature and are therefore subject to a common law of development. But such a comparison must be drawn in a sensible way. The elementary condition for comparison is to find out whether the historical periods of development of the countries concerned are at all *comparable*. For instance, only absolute ignoramuses (such as Prince Y. Trubetskoi in *Russkaya Mysl*) are capable of "comparing" the Russian Marxists' agrarian programme with the programmes of Western Europe, since our programme replies to questions that concern the *bourgeois-democratic* agrarian reform, whereas in the Western countries no such question arises.

The same applies to the national question. In most Western countries it was settled long ago. It is ridiculous to seek an answer to non-existent questions in the programmes of Western Europe. In this respect Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the most important thing—the difference between countries where bourgeois-democratic reforms have long been completed, and those where they have not.

The crux of the matter lies in this difference. Rosa Luxemburg's complete disregard of it transforms her verbose article into a collection of empty and meaningless platitudes.

The epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Western, continental Europe embraces a fairly definite period,

approximately between 1789 and 1871. This was precisely the period of national movements and the creation of national states. When this period drew to a close, Western Europe had been transformed into a settled system of bourgeois states, which, as a general rule, were nationally uniform states. Therefore, to seek the right to self-determination in the programmes of West-European socialists at this time of day is to betray one's ignorance of the ABC of Marxism.

In Eastern Europe and Asia the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions did not begin until 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars—such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our "Orient". And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states. It is precisely and solely because Russia and the neighbouring countries are passing through this period that we must have a clause in our programme on the right of nations to self-determination.

But let us continue the quotation from Rosa Luxemburg's article a little more. She writes:

> "In particular, the programme of a party which is operating in a state with an extremely varied national composition, and for which the national question is a matter of first-rate importance—the programme of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party—does not contain the principle of the right of nations to self-determination." (Ibid.)

Thus, an attempt is made to convince the reader by the example of Austria "in particular". Let us examine this example in the light of concrete historical facts and see just how sound it is.

In the first place, let us pose the fundamental question of the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In Austria, this revolution began in 1848 and was over in 1867. Since then, a more or less fully established bourgeois constitution has dominated, for nearly half a century, and on its basis a legal workers' party is legally functioning.

Therefore, in the internal conditions of Austria's development (i.e., from the standpoint of the development of capitalism in Austria in general, and among its various nations in particular), there are *no* factors that produce

leaps and bounds, a concomitant of which might be the formation of nationally independent states. In assuming, by her comparison, that Russia is in an analogous position in this respect, Rosa Luxemburg not only makes a fundamentally erroneous and anti-historical assumption, but also involuntarily slips into liquidationism.

Secondly, the profound difference in the relations between the nationalities in Austria and those in Russia is particularly important for the question we are concerned with. Not only was Austria for a long time a state in which the Germans preponderated, but the Austrian Germans laid claim to hegemony in the German nation as a whole. This "claim", as Rosa Luxemburg (who is seemingly so averse to commonplaces, platitudes, abstractions...) will perhaps be kind enough to remember, was shattered in the war of 1866. The German nation predominating in Austria found itself *outside the pale* of the independent German state which finally took shape in 1871. On the other hand, the Hungarians' attempt to create an independent national state collapsed under the blows of the Russian serf army as far back as 1849.

A very peculiar situation was thus created—a striving on the part of the Hungarians and then of the Czechs, not for separation from Austria, but, on the contrary, for the preservation of Austria's integrity, precisely in order to preserve national independence, which might have been completely crushed by more rapacious and powerful neighbours! Owing to this peculiar situation, Austria assumed the form of a dual state, and she is now being transformed into a triple state (Germans, Hungarians, Slavs).

Is there anything like this in Russia? Is there in our country a striving of the "subject peoples" for unity with the Great Russians in face of the danger of *worse* national oppression?

One need only pose this question in order to see that the comparison between Russia and Austria on the question of self-determination of nations is meaningless, platitudinous and ignorant.

The peculiar conditions in Russia with regard to the national question are just the reverse of those we see in Austria. Russia is a state with a single national centre—

Great Russia. The Great Russians occupy a vast, unbroken stretch of territory, and number about 70,000,000. The specific features of this national state are: first, that "subject peoples" (which, on the whole, comprise the majority of the entire population—57 per cent) inhabit the border regions; secondly, the oppression of these subject peoples is much stronger here than in the neighbouring states (and not even in the European states alone); thirdly, in a number of cases the oppressed nationalities inhabiting the border regions have compatriots across the border, who enjoy greater national independence (suffice it to mention the Finns, the Swedes, the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Rumanians along the western and southern frontiers of the state); fourthly, the development of capitalism and the general level of culture are often higher in the non-Russian border regions than in the centre. Lastly, it is in the neighbouring Asian states that we see the beginning of a phase of bourgeois revolutions and national movements which are spreading to some of the kindred nationalities within the borders of Russia.

Thus, it is precisely the special concrete, historical features of the national question in Russia that make the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination in the present period a matter of special urgency in our country.

Incidentally, even from the purely factual angle, Rosa Luxemburg's assertion that the Austrian Social-Democrats' programme does not contain any recognition of the right of nations to self-determination is incorrect. We need only open the Minutes of the Brünn Congress, which adopted the national programme,[181] to find the statements by the Ruthenian Social-Democrat Hankiewicz on behalf of the entire Ukrainian (Ruthenian) delegation (p. 85 of the Minutes), and by the Polish Social-Democrat Reger on behalf of the entire Polish delegation (p. 108), to the effect that one of the aspirations of the Austrian Social-Democrats of both the above-mentioned nations is to secure national unity, and the freedom and independence of their nations. Hence, while the Austrian Social-Democrats did not include the right of nations to self-determination directly in their programme, they did nevertheless allow the demand for national independence to be advanced by *sections* of the

party. In effect, this means, of course, the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination! Thus, Rosa Luxemburg's reference to Austria speaks *against* Rosa Luxemburg in *all* respects.

4. "PRACTICALITY" IN THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Rosa Luxemburg's argument that § 9 of our Programme contains nothing "practical" has been seized upon by the Opportunists. Rosa Luxemburg is so delighted with this argument that in some parts of her article this "slogan" is repeated eight times on a single page.

She writes: § 9 "gives no practical lead on the day-by-day policy of the proletariat, no practical solution of national problems".

Let us examine this argument, which elsewhere is formulated in such a way that it makes § 9 look quite meaningless, or else commits us to support all national aspirations.

What does the demand for "practicality" in the national question mean?

It means one of three things: support for all national aspirations; the answer "yes" or "no" to the question of secession by any nation; or that national demands are in general immediately "practicable".

Let us examine all three possible meanings of the demand for "practicality".

The bourgeoisie, which naturally assumes the leadership at the start of every national movement, says that support for all national aspirations is practical. However, the proletariat's policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace (which the bourgeoisie cannot bring about completely and which can be achieved only with *complete* democracy), in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle. Therefore, it is *in opposition to the practicality* of the bourgeoisie that the proletarians advance their *principles* in the national question; they always give the bourgeoisie *only conditional* support. What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national

question is either privileges for its *own* nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called being "practical". The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness. To demand that it should be "practical" means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.

The demand for a "yes" or "no" reply to the question of secession in the case of every nation may seem a very "practical" one. In reality it is absurd; it is metaphysical in theory, while in practice it leads to subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie's policy. The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter; *in either case*, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its "own" nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything at the expense* of another nation.

This may not be "practical", but it is in effect the best guarantee for the achievement of the most democratic of all possible solutions. The proletariat needs *only* such guarantees, whereas the bourgeoisie of every nation requires guarantees for *its own* interest, regardless of the position of (or the possible disadvantages to) other nations.

The bourgeoisie is most of all interested in the "feasibility" of a given demand—hence the invariable policy of coming to terms with the bourgeoisie of other nations, to the detriment of the proletariat. For the proletariat, however, the important thing is to strengthen its class against the bourgeoisie and to educate the masses in the spirit of consistent democracy and socialism.

This may not be "practical" as far as the opportunists are concerned, but it is the only real guarantee, the guar-

antee of the greater national equality and peace, despite the feudal landlords and the *nationalist* bourgeoisie.

The whole task of the proletarians in the national question is "unpractical" from the standpoint of the *nationalist* bourgeoisie of every nation, because the proletarians, opposed as they are to nationalism of every kind, demand "abstract" equality; they demand, as a matter of principle, that there should be no privileges, however slight. Failing to grasp this, Rosa Luxemburg, by her misguided eulogy of practicality, has opened the door wide for the opportunists, and especially for opportunist concessions to Great-Russian nationalism.

Why Great-Russian? Because the Great Russians in Russia are an oppressor nation, and opportunism in the national question will of course find expression among oppressed nations otherwise than among oppressor nations.

On the plea that its demands are "practical", the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations will call upon the proletariat to support its aspirations unconditionally. The most practical procedure is to say a plain "yes" in favour of the secession of a *particular* nation rather than in favour of all nations having the *right* to secede!

The proletariat is opposed to such practicality. While recognising equality and equal rights to a national state, it values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, *from the angle* of the workers' class struggle. This call for practicality is in fact merely a call for uncritical acceptance of bourgeois aspirations.

By supporting the right to secession, we are told, you are supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. This is what Rosa Luxemburg says, and she is echoed by Semkovsky, the opportunist, who incidentally is the only representative of liquidationist ideas on this question, in the liquidationist newspaper!

Our reply to this is: No, it is to the bourgeoisie that a "practical" solution of this question is important. To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the *principles* of the two trends. *Insofar as* the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case,

and more strongly than anyone else, *in favour*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.

If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the *right* to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the *oppressor* nation. Kautsky long ago used this argument against Rosa Luxemburg, and the argument is indisputable. When, in her anxiety not to "assist" the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the *right* to secession in the programme of the Marxists *in Russia*, she is *in fact* assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds. She is in fact assisting opportunist tolerance of the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians.

Carried away by the struggle against nationalism in Poland, Rosa Luxemburg has forgotten the nationalism of the Great Russians, although it is *this* nationalism that is the most formidable at the present time. It is a nationalism that is more feudal than bourgeois, and is the principal obstacle to democracy and to the proletarian struggle. The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.

This is "unpractical" from the standpoint of the bourgeois and the philistine, but it is the only policy in the national question that is practical, based on principles, and really promotes democracy, liberty and proletarian unity.

The recognition of the right to secession for all; the appraisal of each concrete question of secession from the point of view of removing all inequality, all privileges, and all exclusiveness.

Let us consider the position of an oppressor nation. Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great-Russian population* require a struggle against such oppression. The long, centuries-old history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, and the systematic propaganda in favour of such suppression coming from the "upper" classes have created enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great-Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc.

The Great-Russian Black Hundreds deliberately foster these prejudices and encourage them. The Great-Russian bourgeoisie tolerates or condones them. The Great-Russian proletariat cannot achieve *its own* aims or clear the road to its freedom without systematically countering these prejudices.

In Russia, the creation of an independent national state remains, for the time being, the privilege of the Great-Russian nation alone. We, the Great-Russian proletarians, who defend no privileges whatever, do not defend this privilege either. We are fighting on the ground of a definite state; we unite the workers of all nations living in this state; we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal along *all* possible paths.

However, we cannot move towards that goal unless we combat all nationalism, and uphold the equality of the various nations. Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle "*guesses*", we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state. We respect this right; we do not uphold the privileges of Great Russians with regard to Ukrainians; we *educate* the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting *state* privileges for any nation.

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* A certain L. Vl.[182] in Paris considers this word un-Marxist. This L. Vl. is amusingly "*superklug*" (too clever by half). And "this too-clever-by-half" L. Vl. apparently intends to write an essay on the deletion of the words "population", "nation", etc., from our minimum programme (having in mind the class struggle!).

In the leaps which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions, clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable. We proletarians declare in advance that we are *opposed* to Great-Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation.

In her quest for "practicality" Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the *principal* practical task both of the Great-Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of other nationalities: that of day-by-day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges, and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question, for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on an equal footing.

This propaganda may be "unpractical" from the point of view of the Great-Russian oppressors, as well as from the point of view of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations (both demand a *definite* "yes" or "no", and accuse the Social-Democrats of being "vague"). In reality it is this propaganda, and this propaganda alone, that ensures the genuinely democratic, the genuinely socialist education of the masses. This is the only propaganda to ensure the greatest chances of national peace in Russia, should she remain a multi-national state, and the most peaceful (and for the proletarian class struggle, harmless) division into separate national states, should the question of such a division arise.

To explain this policy—the only proletarian policy—in the national question more concretely, we shall examine the attitude of Great-Russian liberalism towards the "self-determination of nations", and the example of Norway's secession from Sweden.

5. THE LIBERAL BOURGEOISIE AND THE SOCIALIST OPPORTUNISTS IN THE NATIONAL QUESTION

We have seen that the following argument is one of Rosa Luxemburg's "trump cards" in her struggle against the programme of the Marxists in Russia: recognition of the right

to self-determination is tantamount to supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. On the other hand, she says, if we take this right to mean no more than combating all violence against other nations, there is no need for a special clause in the programme, for Social-Democrats are, in general, opposed to all national oppression and inequality.

The first argument, as Kautsky irrefutably proved nearly twenty years ago, is a case of blaming other people for one's own nationalism, in her fear of the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, Rosa Luxemburg is actually playing into the hands of the Black-Hundred nationalism of the Great Russians! Her second argument is *actually* a timid evasion of the question whether or not recognition of national equality includes recognition of the right to secession. If it does, then Rosa Luxemburg admits that, in principle, § 9 of our Programme is correct. If it does not, then she does not recognise national equality. Shuflling and evasions will not help matters here!

However, the best way to test these and all similar arguments is to study the attitude of the *various classes* of society towards this question. For the Marxist this test is obligatory. We must proceed from what is objective; we must examine the relations between the classes on this point. In failing to do so, Rosa Luxemburg is guilty of those very sins of metaphysics, abstractions, platitudes, and sweeping statements, etc., of which she vainly tries to accuse her opponents.

We are discussing the Programme of the Marxists *in Russia*, i.e., of the Marxists of all the nationalities in Russia. Should we not examine the position of the *ruling* classes of Russia?

The position of the "bureaucracy" (we beg pardon for this inaccurate term) and of the feudal landlords of our united-nobility type is well known. They definitely reject both the equality of nationalities and the right to self-determination. Theirs is the old motto of the days of serfdom: autocracy, orthodoxy, and the national essence—the last term applying only to the Great-Russian nation. Even the Ukrainians are declared to be an "alien" people and their very language is being suppressed.

Let us glance, at the Russian bourgeoisie, which was "called upon" to take part—a very modest part, it is true, but nevertheless some part—in the government, under the "June Third" legislative and administrative system. It will not need many words to prove that the Octobrists are following the Rights in this question. Unfortunately, some Marxists pay much less attention to the stand of the Great-Russian liberal bourgeoisie, the Progressists and the Cadets. Yet he who fails to study that stand and give it careful thought will inevitably flounder in abstractions and groundless statements in discussing the question of the right of nations to self-determination.

Skilled though it is in the art of diplomatically evading direct answers to "unpleasant" questions, *Rech*, the principal organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, was compelled, in its controversy with *Pravda* last year, to make certain valuable admissions. The trouble started over the All-Ukraine Students' Congress held in Lvov in the summer of 1913.[183] Mr. Mogilyansky, the "Ukrainian expert" or Ukrainian correspondent of *Rech*, wrote an article in which he poured vitriolic abuse ("ravings", "adventurism", etc.) on the idea that the Ukraine should secede, an idea which Dontsov, a nationalist-socialist, had advocated and the above-mentioned congress approved.

While in no way identifying itself with Mr. Dontsov, and declaring explicitly that he was a nationalist-socialist and that many Ukrainian Marxists did not agree with him, *Rabochaya Pravda* stated that the *tone* of *Rech*, or, rather, the *way it formulated the question in principle*, was improper and reprehensible for a Great-Russian democrat, or for anyone desiring to pass as a democrat.* Let *Rech* repudiate the Dontsovs if it likes, but, *from the standpoint of principle*, a Great-Russian organ of democracy, which it claims to be, cannot be oblivious of the *freedom* to secede, the *right* to secede.

A few months later, *Rech*, No. 331, published an "explanation" from Mr. Mogilyansky, who had learned from the Ukrainian newspaper *Shlyakhi*,[184] published in Lvov, of Mr. Dontsov's reply, in which, incidentally, Dontsov

* See present edition, Vol. 19, pp. 268-69.—*Ed.*

stated that "the chauvinist attacks in *Rech* have been properly sullied [branded?] only in the Russian Social-Democratic press". This "explanation" consisted of the thrice-repeated statement that "criticism of Mr. Dontsov's recipes" "has nothing in common with the repudiation of the right of nations to self-determination".

> "It must be said," wrote Mr. Mogilyansky, "that even 'the right of nations to self-determination' is not a fetish [mark this!] beyond criticism: unwholesome conditions in the life of nations may give rise to unwholesome tendencies in national self-determination, and the fact that these are brought to light does not mean that the right of nations to self-determination has been rejected."

As you see, this liberal's talk of a "fetish" was quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg's. It was obvious that Mr. Mogilyansky was trying to evade a direct reply to the question whether or not he recognised the right to political self-determination, i.e., to secession.

The newspaper *Proletarskaya Pravda*, issue No. 4, for December 11, 1913, also put this question *point-blank* to Mr. Mogilyansky and to the Constitutional-Democratic *Party*.*

Thereupon *Rech* (No. 340) published an unsigned, i.e., official, editorial statement replying to this question. This reply boils down to the following three points:

1) §11 of the Constitutional-Democratic Party's programme speaks bluntly, precisely and clearly of the "right of nations to free *cultural* self-determination".

2) *Rech* affirms that *Proletarskaya Pravda* "hopelessly confuses" self-determination with separatism, with the secession of a given nation.

3) "*Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of 'nations to secede' from the Russian state.*" (See the article "National-Liberalism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", in *Proletarskaya Pravda* No. 12, December 20, 1913.**)

Let us first consider the second point in the *Rech* statement. How strikingly it shows to the Semkovskys, Liebmans, Yurkeviches and other opportunists that the hue and cry

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* See present edition, Vol. 19, pp. 525-27.—*Ed.*

** See pp. 56-58 of this volume.—*Ed.*

they have raised about the alleged "vagueness", or "indefiniteness", of the term "self-determination" is *in fact*, i.e., from the standpoint of objective class relationships and the class struggle in Russia, *simply a rehash* of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie's utterances!

Proletarskaya Pravda put the following *three* questions to the enlightened "Constitutional-Democratic" gentlemen of *Rech*: (1) do they deny that, throughout the entire history of international democracy, and especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, self-determination of nations has been understood to mean precisely political self-determination, the right to form an independent national state? (2) do they deny that the well-known resolution adopted by the International Socialist Congress in London in 1896 has the same meaning? and (3) do they deny that Plekhanov, in writing about self-determination as far back as 1902, meant precisely political self-determination? When *Proletarskaya Pravda* posed these three questions, *the Cadets fell silent*!

Not a word did they utter in reply, for they had nothing to say. They had to admit tacitly that *Proletarskaya Pravda* was absolutely right.

The liberals' outcries that the term "self-determination" is vague and that the Social-Democrats "hopelessly confuse" it with separatism are nothing more than attempts to *confuse* the issue, and evade recognition of a universally established democratic principle. If the Semkovskys, Liebmans and Yurkeviches were not so ignorant, they would be ashamed to address the workers in a *liberal* vein.

But to proceed. *Proletarskaya Pravda* compelled *Rech* to admit that, in the programme of the Constitutional-Democrats, the term "cultural" self-determination means in effect the *repudiation of political* self-determination.

"Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of 'nations to secede' from the Russian state"—it was not without reason that *Proletarskaya Pravda* recommended to *Novoye Vremya* and *Zemshchina* these words from *Rech* as an example of our Cadets' "loyalty". In its issue No. 13563, *Novoye Vremya*, which never, of course, misses an opportunity of mentioning "the Yids" and taking digs at the Cadets, nevertheless stated:

"What, to the Social-Democrats, is an axiom of political wisdom [i.e., recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, to secede], is today beginning to cause disagreement even among the Cadets."

By declaring that they "have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of nations to secede from the Russian state", the Cadets have, in principle, taken exactly the same stand as *Novoye Vremya*. This is precisely one of the fundamentals of Cadet *national-liberalism*, of their kinship with the Purishkeviches, and of their dependence, political, ideological and practical, on the latter. *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: "The Cadets have studied history and know only too well what—to put it mildly—pogrom-like actions the practice of the ancient right of the Purishkeviches to 'grab 'em and hold 'em' has often led to." Although perfectly aware of the feudalist source and nature of the Purishkeviches' omnipotence, the Cadets are, nevertheless, taking their stand *on the basis* of the relationships and frontiers created by that very class. Knowing full well that there is much in the relationships and frontiers created or fixed by this class that is un-European and anti-European (we would say Asiatic if this did not sound undeservedly slighting to the Japanese and Chinese), the Cadets, nevertheless, accept them as the utmost limit.

Thus, they are adjusting themselves to the Purishkeviches, cringing to them, fearing to jeopardise their position, protecting them from the people's movement, from the democracy. As *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: "In effect, this means adapting oneself to the interests of the feudal-minded landlords and to the worst nationalist prejudices of the dominant nation, instead of systematically combating those prejudices."

Being men who are familiar with history and claim to be democrats, the Cadets do not even attempt to assert that the democratic movement, which is today characteristic of both Eastern Europe and Asia and is striving to change both on the model of the civilised capitalist countries, is bound to leave intact the boundaries fixed by the feudal epoch, the epoch of the omnipotence of the Purishkeviches and the disfranchisement of wide strata of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The fact that the question raised in the controversy between *Proletarskaya Pravda* and *Rech* was not merely a literary question, but one that involved a real political issue of the day, was proved, among other things, by the last conference of the Constitutional-Democratic Party held on March 23-25, 1914; in the official report of this conference in *Rech* (No. 83, of March 26, 1914) we read:

"A particularly lively discussion also took place on national problems. The Kiev deputies, who were supported by N. V. Nekrasov and A. M. Kolyubakin, pointed out that the national question was becoming a key issue, which would have to be faced up to more resolutely than hitherto. F. F. Kokoshkin pointed out, however [this "however" is like Shchedrin's "but"—"the ears never grow higher than the forehead, never!"] that both the programme and past political experience demanded that 'elastic formulas' of 'political self-determination of nationalities' should be handled very carefully."

This most remarkable line of reasoning at the Cadet conference deserves serious attention from all Marxists and all democrats. (We will note in parentheses that *Kievskaya Mysl*, which is evidently very well informed and no doubt presents Mr. Kokoshkin's ideas correctly, added that, of course, as a warning to his opponents, he laid special stress on the danger of the "disintegration" of the state.)

The official report in *Rech* is composed with consummate diplomatic skill designed to lift the veil as little as possible and to conceal as much as possible. Yet, in the main, what took place at the Cadet conference is quite clear. The liberal-bourgeois delegates, who were familiar with the state of affairs in the Ukraine, and the "Left" Cadets raised the question *precisely of the political* self-determination of nations. Otherwise, there would have been no need for Mr. Kokoshkin to urge that this "formula" should be "handled carefully".

The Cadet programme, which was of course known to the delegates at the Cadet conference, speaks of "cultural", *not* of political self-determination. Hence, Mr. Kokoshkin was *defending* the programme *against* the Ukrainian delegates, and *against* the Left Cadets; he was defending "cultural" self-determination *as opposed to* "political" self-determination. It is perfectly clear that in opposing "political" self-determination, in playing up the danger of the

"disintegration of the state", and in calling the formula "political self-determination" an "*elastic*" one (quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg!), Mr. Kokoshkin was defending Great-Russian national-liberalism against the more "Left" or more democratic elements of the Constitutional-Democratic Party and also against the Ukrainian bourgeoisie.

Mr. Kokoshkin won the day at the Cadet conference, as is evident from the treacherous little word "however" in the *Rech* report; Great-Russian national-liberalism has triumphed among the Cadets. Will not this victory help to clear the minds of those misguided individuals among the Marxists in Russia who, like the Cadets, have also begun to fear the "elastic formulas of political self-determination of nationalities"?

Let us, "however", examine the substance of Mr. Kokoshkin's line of thought. By referring to "past political experience" (i.e., evidently, the experience of 1905, when the Great-Russian bourgeoisie took alarm for its national privileges and scared the Cadet Party with its fears), and also by playing up the danger of the "disintegration of the state", Mr. Kokoshkin showed that he understood perfectly well that political self-determination can mean nothing else but the right to secede and form an independent national state. The question is—how should Mr. Kokoshkin's fears be appraised in the light of democracy in general, and the proletarian class struggle in particular?

Mr. Kokoshkin would have us believe that recognition of the right to secession increases the danger of the "disintegration of the state". This is the viewpoint of Constable Mymretsov, whose motto was "grab 'em and hold 'em". From the viewpoint of democracy in general, the very opposite is the case: recognition of the right to secession *reduces* the danger of the "disintegration of the state".

Mr. Kokoshkin argues exactly like the nationalists do. At their last congress they attacked the Ukrainian "Mazeppists". The Ukrainian movement, Mr. Savenko and Co. exclaimed, threatens to weaken the ties between the Ukraine and Russia, since Austrian Ukrainophilism is strengthening the Ukrainians' ties with Austria! It remains unexplained why Russia cannot try to "strengthen" her ties with the

Ukrainians *through the same method* that the Savenkos blame Austria for using, i.e., by granting the Ukrainians freedom to use their own language, self-government and an autonomous Diet.

The arguments of the Savenkos and Kokoshkins are exactly alike, and from the purely logical point of view they are equally ridiculous and absurd. Is it not clear that the more liberty the Ukrainian nationality enjoys in any particular country, the stronger its ties with that country will be? One would think that this truism could not be disputed without totally abandoning all the premises of democracy. Can there be greater freedom of nationality, as such, than the freedom to secede, the freedom to form an independent national state?

To clear up this question, which has been so confused by the liberals (and by those who are so misguided as to echo them), we shall cite a very simple example. Let us take the question of divorce. In her article Rosa Luxemburg writes that the centralised democratic state, while conceding autonomy to its constituent parts, should retain the most important branches of legislation, including legislation on divorce, under the jurisdiction of the central parliament. The concern that the central authority of the democratic state should retain the power to allow divorce can be readily understood. The reactionaries are opposed to freedom of divorce; they say that it must be "handled carefully", and loudly declare that it means the "disintegration of the family". The democrats, however, believe that the reactionaries are hypocrites, and that they are actually defending the omnipotence of the police and the bureaucracy, the privileges of one of the sexes, and the worst kind of oppression of women. They believe that in actual fact freedom of divorce will not cause the "disintegration" of family ties, but, on the contrary, will strengthen them on a democratic basis, which is the only possible and durable basis in civilised society.

To accuse those who support freedom of self-determination, i.e., freedom to secede, of encouraging separatism, is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce of encouraging the destruction of family ties. Just as in bourgeois society the defenders of privilege

and corruption, on which bourgeois marriage rests, oppose freedom of divorce, so, in the capitalist state, repudiation of the right to self-determination, i.e., the right of nations to secede, means nothing more than defence of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the detriment of democratic methods.

No doubt, the political chicanery arising from all the relationships existing in capitalist society sometimes leads members of parliament and journalists to indulge in frivolous and even nonsensical twaddle about one or another nation seceding. But only reactionaries can allow themselves to be frightened (or pretend to be frightened) by such talk. Those who stand by democratic principles, i.e., who insist that questions of state be decided by the mass of the population, know very well that there is a "tremendous distance"[185] between what the politicians prate about and what the people decide. From their daily experience the masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a big market and a big state. They will, therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse. In that case, the interests of capitalist development and of the freedom of the class struggle will be best served by secession.

Thus, from whatever angle we approach Mr. Kokoshkin's arguments, they prove to be the height of absurdity and a mockery of the principles of democracy. And yet there is a modicum of logic in these arguments, the logic of the class interests of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. Like most members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, Mr. Kokoshkin is a lackey of the money-bags of that bourgeoisie. He defends its privileges in general, and its *state* privileges in particular. He defends them hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder with Purishkevich, the only difference being that Purishkevich puts more faith in the feudalist cudgel, while Kokoshkin and Co. realise that this cudgel was badly damaged in 1905, and rely more on bourgeois methods of fooling the masses, such as frightening the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants with the spectre of the "disintegration of the state", and deluding them with phrases

about blending "people's freedom" with historical tradition, etc.

The liberals' hostility to the principle of political self-determination of nations can have one, and only one, real class meaning: national-liberalism, defence of the state privileges of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. And the opportunists among the Marxists in Russia, who today, under the Third of June regime, are against the right of nations to self-determination—the liquidator Semkovsky, the Bundist Liebman, the Ukrainian petty-bourgeois Yurkevich—are *actually* following in the wake of the national-liberals, and corrupting the working class with national-liberal ideas.

The interests of the working class and of its struggle against capitalism demand complete solidarity and the closest unity of the workers of all nations; they demand resistance to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie of every nationality. Hence, Social-Democrats would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede, or if they were to support all the national demands of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations. It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is exploited chiefly by the Great-Russian bourgeoisie rather than the non-Russian bourgeoisie, or by the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great-Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges. Capitalism is developing and will continue to develop, anyway, both in integral states with a mixed population and in separate national states.

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its "own" national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of

another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation.

We will get even more striking confirmation of this if we take the concrete case of Norway's secession from Sweden.

6. NORWAY'S SECESSION FROM SWEDEN

Rosa Luxemburg cites precisely this example, and discusses it as follows:

"The latest event in the history of federative relations, the secession of Norway from Sweden—which at the time was hastily seized upon by the social-patriotic Polish press (see the Cracow *Naprzód*[186]) as a gratifying sign of the strength and progressive nature of the tendency towards state secession—at once provided striking proof that federalism and its concomitant, separation, are in no way an expression of progress or democracy. After the so-called Norwegian 'revolution', which meant that the Swedish king was deposed and compelled to leave Norway, the Norwegians coolly proceeded to choose another king, formally rejecting, by a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic. That which superficial admirers of all national movements and of all semblance of independence proclaimed to be a 'revolution' was simply a manifestation of peasant and petty-bourgeois particularism, the desire to have a king 'of their own' for their money instead of one imposed upon them by the Swedish aristocracy, and was, consequently, a movement that had absolutely nothing in common with revolution. At the same time, the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway showed once more to what extent, in this case also, the federation which had existed until then was only an expression of purely dynastic interests and, therefore, merely a form of monarchism and reaction." (*Przegląd*.)

That is literally all that Rosa Luxemburg has to say on this score! Admittedly, it would have been difficult for her to have revealed the hopelessness of her position more saliently than she has done in this particular instance.

The question was, and is: do the Social-Democrats in a mixed national state need a programme that recognises the right to self-determination or secession?

What does the example of Norway, cited by Rosa Luxemburg, tell us on this point?

Our author twists and turns, exercises her wit and rails at *Naprzód*, but she does not answer the question! Rosa

Luxemburg speaks about everything under the sun so as to *avoid saying a single word* about the actual point at issue!

Undoubtedly, in wishing to have a king of their own for their money, and in rejecting, in a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic, the Norwegian petty bourgeoisie displayed exceedingly bad philistine qualities. Undoubtedly, *Naprzód* displayed equally bad and equally philistine qualities in failing to notice this.

But what has all this to do with the case?

The question under discussion was the right of nations to self-determination and the attitude to be adopted by the socialist proletariat towards this right! Why, then, does not Rosa Luxemburg answer this question instead of beating about the bush?

To a mouse there is no stronger beast than the cat, it is said. To Rosa Luxemburg there is evidently no stronger beast than the "Fracy". "Fracy" is the popular term for the "Polish Socialist Party", its so-called revolutionary section, and the Cracow newspaper *Naprzód* shares the views of that "section". Rosa Luxemburg is so blinded by her fight against the nationalism of that "section" that she loses sight of everything except *Naprzód*.

If *Naprzód* says "yes", Rosa Luxemburg considers it her sacred duty to say an immediate "no", without stopping to think that by so doing she does not reveal independence of *Naprzód*, but, on the contrary, her ludicrous dependence on the "Fracy" and her inability to see things from a viewpoint any deeper and broader than that of the Cracow anthill. *Naprzód*, of course, is a wretched and by no means Marxist organ; but that should not prevent us from properly analysing the example of Norway, once we have chosen it.

To analyse this example in Marxist fashion, we must deal, not with the vices of the awfully terrible "Fracy", but, first, with the concrete historical features of the secession of Norway from Sweden, and secondly, with the tasks which confronted the *proletariat* of both countries in connection with this secession.

The geographic, economic and language ties between Norway and Sweden are as intimate as those between the Great Russians and many other Slav nations. But the union between Norway and Sweden was not a voluntary one, and

in dragging in the question of "federation" Rosa Luxemburg was talking at random, simply because she did not know what to say. Norway was *ceded* to Sweden by the monarchs during the Napoleonic wars, against the will of the Norwegians; and the Swedes had to bring troops into Norway to subdue her.

Despite the very extensive autonomy which Norway enjoyed (she had her own parliament, etc.), there was constant friction between Norway and Sweden for many decades after the union, and the Norwegians strove hard to throw off the yoke of the Swedish aristocracy. At last, in August 1905, they succeeded: the Norwegian parliament resolved that the Swedish king was no longer king of Norway, and in the referendum held later among the Norwegian people, the overwhelming majority (about 200,000 as against a few hundred) voted for complete separation from Sweden. After a short period of indecision, the Swedes resigned themselves to the fact of secession.

This example shows us on what grounds cases of the secession of nations are practicable, and actually occur, under modern economic and political relationships, and the *form* secession sometimes assumes under conditions of political freedom and democracy.

No Social-Democrat will deny—unless he would profess indifference to questions of political freedom and democracy (in which case he is naturally no longer a Social-Democrat)—that this example *virtually* proves that it is the *bounden duty* of class-conscious workers to conduct systematic propaganda and prepare the ground for the settlement of conflicts that may arise over the secession of nations, not in the "Russian way", but *only in the way* they were settled in 1905 between Norway and Sweden. This is exactly what is meant by the demand in the programme for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. But Rosa Luxemburg tried to get around a fact that was repugnant to her theory by violently attacking the philistinism of the Norwegian philistines and the Cracow *Naprzód*; for she understood perfectly well that this historical fact *completely refutes* her phrases about the right of nations to self-determination being a "utopia", or like the right "to eat off gold plates", etc. Such phrases only express a smug and opportunist belief in the

immutability of the present alignment of forces among the nationalities of Eastern Europe.

To proceed. In the question of the self-determination of nations, as in every other question, we are interested, first and foremost, in the self-determination of the proletariat within a given nation. Rosa Luxemburg modestly evaded this question too, for she realised that an analysis of it on the basis of the example of Norway, which she herself had chosen, would be disastrous to her "theory".

What position did the Norwegian and Swedish proletariat take, and indeed had to take, in the conflict over secession? *After* Norway seceded, the class-conscious workers of Norway would naturally have voted for a republic,* and if some socialists voted otherwise it only goes to show how much dense, philistine opportunism there sometimes is in the European socialist movement. There can be no two opinions about that, and we mention the point only because Rosa Luxemburg is trying to obscure the issue by speaking *off the mark*. We do not know whether the Norwegian socialist programme made it obligatory for Norwegian Social-Democrats to hold particular views on the question of secession. We will assume that it did not, and that the Norwegian socialists left it an open question as to what extent the autonomy of Norway gave sufficient scope to wage the class struggle freely, or to what extent the eternal friction and conflicts with the Swedish aristocracy hindered freedom of economic life. But it cannot be disputed that the Norwegian proletariat had to oppose this aristocracy and support Norwegian peasant democracy (with all its philistine limitations).

And the Swedish proletariat? It is common knowledge that the Swedish landed proprietors, abetted by the Swedish clergy, advocated war against Norway. Inasmuch as Norway was much weaker than Sweden, had already experienced a Swedish invasion, and the Swedish aristocracy carries enor-

* Since the majority of the Norwegian nation was in favour of a monarchy while the proletariat wanted a republic, the Norwegian proletariat was, generally speaking, confronted with the alternative: either revolution, if conditions were ripe for it, or submission to the will of the majority and prolonged propaganda and agitation work.

mous weight in its own country, this advocacy of war presented a grave danger. We may be sure that the Swedish Kokoshkins spent much time and energy in trying to corrupt the minds of the Swedish people by appeals to "handle" the "elastic formulas of political self-determination of nations carefully" by painting horrific pictures of the danger of the "disintegration of the state" and by assuring them that "people's freedom" was compatible with the traditions of the Swedish aristocracy. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Swedish Social-Democrats would have betrayed the cause of socialism and democracy if they had not fought with all their might to combat both the landlord and the "Kokoshkin" ideology and policy, and if they had failed to demand, *not only* equality of nations in general (to which the Kokoshkins also subscribe), but also the right of nations to self-determination, Norway's freedom to secede.

The close alliance between the Norwegian and Swedish workers, their complete fraternal class solidarity, *gained* from the Swedish workers' recognition of the right of the Norwegians to secede. This convinced the Norwegian workers that the Swedish workers were not infected with Swedish nationalism, and that they placed fraternity with the Norwegian proletarians above the privileges of the Swedish bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The dissolution of the ties imposed upon Norway by the monarchs of Europe and the Swedish aristocracy strengthened the ties between the Norwegian and Swedish workers. The Swedish workers have proved that in spite of *all* the vicissitudes of bourgeois policy—bourgeois relations may quite possibly bring about a repetition of the forcible subjection of the Norwegians to the Swedes!—they will be able to preserve and defend the complete equality and class solidarity of the workers of both nations in the struggle against both the Swedish and the Norwegian bourgeoisie.

Incidentally, this reveals how groundless and even frivolous are the attempts sometimes made by the "Fracy" to "use" our disagreements with Rosa Luxemburg against Polish Social-Democracy. The "Fracy" are not a proletarian or a socialist party, but a petty-bourgeois nationalist party, something like Polish Social-Revolutionaries. There never has been, nor could there be, any question of unity between

the Russian Social-Democrats and this party. On the other hand no Russian Social-Democrat has ever "repented" of the close relations and unity that have been established with the Polish Social-Democrats. The Polish Social-Democrats have rendered a great historical service by creating the first really Marxist, proletarian party in Poland, a country imbued with nationalist aspirations and passions. Yet the service the Polish Social-Democrats have rendered is a great one, not because Rosa Luxemburg has talked a lot of nonsense about § 9 of the Russian Marxists' Programme, but despite that sad circumstance.

The question of the "right to self-determination" is of course not so important to the Polish Social-Democrats as it is to the Russian. It is quite understandable that in their zeal (sometimes a little excessive, perhaps) to combat the nationalistically blinded petty bourgeoisie of Poland the Polish Social-Democrats should overdo things. No Russian Marxist has ever thought of blaming the Polish Social-Democrats for being opposed to the secession of Poland. These Social-Democrats err only when, like Rosa Luxemburg, they try to deny the necessity of including the recognition of the right to self-determination in the Programme of the *Russian* Marxists.

Virtually, this is like attempting to apply relationships, understandable by Cracow standards, to all the peoples and nations inhabiting Russia, including the Great Russians. It means being "Polish nationalists the wrong way round", not Russian, not international Social-Democrats.

For international Social-Democracy stands for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. This is what we shall now proceed to discuss.

7. THE RESOLUTION OF THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS, 1896

This resolution reads:

"This Congress declares that it stands for the full right of all nations to self-determination [*Selbstbestimmungsrecht*] and expresses its sympathy for the workers of every country now suffering under the yoke of military, national or other absolutism. This Congress calls upon the workers of all these countries to join the ranks of the class-conscious [*Klassenbewusste*—those who understand their

class interests] workers of the whole world in order jointly to fight for the defeat of international capitalism and for the achievement of the aims of international Social-Democracy."*

As we have already pointed out, our opportunists—Semkovsky, Liebman and Yurkevich—are simply unaware of this resolution. But Rosa Luxemburg knows it and quotes the full text, which contains the same expression as that contained in our programme, viz., "self-determination".

How does Rosa Luxemburg remove this obstacle from the path of her "original" theory?

Oh, quite simply ... the whole emphasis lies in the second part of the resolution ... its declarative character ... one can refer to it only by mistake!

The feebleness and utter confusion of our author are simply amazing. Usually it is only the opportunists who talk about the consistent democratic and socialist points in the programme being mere declarations, and cravenly avoid an open debate on them. It is apparently not without reason that Rosa Luxemburg has this time found herself in the deplorable company of the Semkovskys, Liebmans and Yurkeviches. Rosa Luxemburg does not venture to state openly whether she regards the above resolution as correct or erroneous. She shifts and shuffles as if counting on the inattentive or ill-informed reader, who forgets the first part of the resolution by the time he has started reading the second, or who has never heard of the discussion that took place in the socialist press *prior* to the London Congress.

Rosa Luxemburg is greatly mistaken, however, if she imagines that, in the sight of the class-conscious workers of Russia, she can get away with trampling upon the resolution of the International on such an important fundamental issue, without even deigning to analyse it critically.

Rosa Luxemburg's point of view was voiced during the discussions which took place prior to the London Congress, mainly in the columns of *Die Neue Zeit*, organ of the German

* See the official German report of the London Congress: *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des internationalen sozialistischen Arbeiter- und Gewerkschafts-Kongresses zu London, vom 27. Juli bis 1. August 1896*, Berlin, 1897, S. 18. A Russian pamphlet has been published containing the decisions of international congresses in which the word "self-determination" is wrongly translated as "autonomy".

Marxists; *in essence this point of view was defeated in the International*! That is the crux of the matter, which the Russian reader must particularly bear in mind.

The debate turned on the question of Poland's independence. Three points of view were put forward:

1. That of the "Fracy", in whose name Haecker spoke. They wanted the International to include in *its own* programme a demand for the independence of Poland. The motion was not carried and this point of view was defeated in the International.

2. Rosa Luxemburg's point of view, viz., the Polish socialists should not demand independence for Poland. This point of view entirely precluded the proclamation of the right of nations to self-determination. It was likewise defeated in the International.

3. The point of view which was elaborated at the time by K. Kautsky, who opposed Rosa Luxemburg and proved that her materialism was extremely "one-sided"; according to Kautsky, the International could not at the time make the independence of Poland a point in its programme; but the Polish socialists were fully entitled to put forward such a demand. From the socialists' point of view it was undoubtedly a mistake to ignore the tasks of national liberation in a situation where national oppression existed.

The International's resolution reproduces the most essential and fundamental propositions in this point of view: on the one hand, the absolutely direct, unequivocal recognition of the full right of all nations to self-determination; on the other hand, the equally unambiguous appeal to the workers for *international* unity in their class struggle.

We think that this resolution is absolutely correct, and that, to the countries of Eastern Europe and Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is this resolution, with both its parts being taken as an integral whole, that gives the only correct lead to the proletarian class policy in the national question.

Let us deal with the three above-mentioned viewpoints in somewhat greater detail.

As is known, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels considered it the bounden duty of the whole of West-European democracy, and still more of Social-Democracy, to give active support to

the demand for Polish independence. For the period of the 1840s and 1860s, the period of the bourgeois revolutions in Austria and Germany, and the period of the "Peasant Reform" in Russia,[187] this point of view was quite correct and the only one that was consistently democratic and proletarian. So long as the masses of the people in Russia and in most of the Slav countries were still sunk in torpor, so long as *there were no* independent, mass, democratic movements in those countries, the liberation movement of the *gentry* in Poland assumed an immense and paramount importance from the point of view, not only of Russian, not only of Slav, but of European democracy as a whole.*[188]

But while Marx's standpoint was quite correct for the forties, fifties and sixties or for the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it has ceased to be correct by the twentieth century. Independent democratic movements, and even an independent proletarian movement, have arisen in most Slav countries, even in Russia, one of the most backward Slav countries. Aristocratic Poland has disappeared, yielding place to capitalist Poland. Under such circumstances Poland could not but lose her *exceptional* revolutionary importance.

The attempt of the P.S.P. (the Polish Socialist Party, the present-day "Fracy") in 1896 to "establish" for all time the point of view Marx had held in a *different epoch* was an attempt to use the *letter* of Marxism against the *spirit* of Marxism. The Polish Social-Democrats were therefore quite right in attacking the extreme nationalism of the Polish petty bourgeoisie and pointing out that the national question was of secondary importance to Polish workers, in

* It would be a very interesting piece of historical research to compare the position of a noble Polish rebel in 1863 with that of the all-Russia revolutionary democrat, Chernyshevsky, who (like Marx), was able to appreciate the importance of the Polish movement, and with that of the Ukrainian petty bourgeois Dragomanov, who appeared much later and expressed the views of a peasant, so ignorant and sluggish, and so attached to his dung heap, that his legitimate hatred of the Polish gentry blinded him to the significance which their struggle had for all-Russia democracy. (Cf. Dragomanov, *Historical Poland and Great-Russian Democracy*.) Dragomanov richly deserved the fervent kisses which were subsequently bestowed on him by Mr. P. B. Struve, who by that time had become a national-liberal.

creating for the first time a purely proletarian party in Poland and proclaiming the extremely important principle that the Polish and the Russian workers must maintain the closest alliance in their class struggle.

But did this mean that at the beginning of the twentieth century the International could regard the principle of political self-determination of nations, or the right to secede, as unnecessary to Eastern Europe and Asia? This would have been the height of absurdity, and (theoretically) tantamount to admitting that the bourgeois-democratic reform of the Turkish, Russian and Chinese states had been consummated; indeed it would have been tantamount (in practice) to opportunism towards absolutism.

No. At a time when bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia have begun, in this period of the awakening and intensification of national movements and of the formation of independent proletarian parties, the task of these parties with regard to national policy must be twofold: recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination, since bourgeois-democratic reform is not yet completed and since working-class democracy consistently, seriously and sincerely (and not in a liberal, Kokoshkin fashion) fights for equal rights for nations; then, a close, unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie.

It is this twofold task of the proletariat that the 1896 resolution of the International formulates. That is the substance, the underlying principle, of the resolution adopted by the Conference of Russian Marxists held in the summer of 1913. Some people profess to see a "contradiction" in the fact that while point 4 of this resolution, which recognises the right to self-determination and secession, seems to "concede" the maximum to nationalism (in reality, the recognition of the *right of all* nations to self-determination implies the maximum of *democracy* and the minimum of nationalism), point 5 warns the workers against the nationalist slogans of the bourgeoisie of any nation and demands the unity and amalgamation of the workers of all nations in internationally united proletarian organisations. But this is a "contradiction"

only for extremely shallow minds, which, for instance, cannot grasp why the unity and class solidarity of the Swedish and the Norwegian proletariat *gained* when the Swedish workers upheld Norway's freedom to secede and form an independent state.

8. THE UTOPIAN KARL MARX AND THE PRACTICAL ROSA LUXEMBURG

Calling Polish independence a "utopia" and repeating this *ad nauseam*, Rosa Luxemburg exclaims ironically: Why not raise the demand for the independence of Ireland?

The "practical" Rosa Luxemburg evidently does not know what Karl Marx's attitude to the question of Irish independence was. It is worth while dwelling upon this, so as to show how a *concrete* demand for national independence was analysed from a genuinely Marxist, not opportunist, standpoint.

It was Marx's custom to "sound out" his socialist acquaintances, as he expressed it, to test their intelligence and the strength of their convictions."[189] After making the acquaintance of Lopatin, Marx wrote to Engels on July 5, 1870, expressing a highly flattering opinion of the young Russian socialist but adding at the same time:

"*Poland* is his weak point. On this point he speaks quite like an Englishman—say, an English Chartist of the old school—about Ireland."[190]

Marx questions a socialist belonging to an oppressor nation about his attitude to the oppressed nation and at once reveals a defect *common* to the socialists of the dominant nations (the English and the Russian): failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the bourgeoisie of the "dominant nation".

Before passing on to Marx's positive declarations on Ireland, we must point out that in general the attitude of Marx and Engels to the national question was strictly critical, and that they recognised its historically conditioned importance. Thus, Engels wrote to Marx on May 23, 1851, that the study of history was leading him to pessimistic conclusions in regard to Poland, that the importance of Poland was

temporary—only until the agrarian revolution in Russia. The role of the Poles in history was one of "bold (hotheaded) foolishness". "And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland has successfully represented progress, even in relation to Russia, or done anything at all of historical importance." Russia contains more of civilisation, education, industry and the bourgeoisie than "the Poland of the indolent gentry". "What are Warsaw and Cracow compared to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa!" Engels had no faith in the success of the Polish gentry's insurrections.

But all these thoughts, showing the deep insight of genius, by no means prevented Engels and Marx from treating the Polish movement with the most profound and ardent sympathy twelve years later, when Russia was still dormant and Poland was seething.

When drafting the Address of the International in 1864, Marx wrote to Engels (on November 4, 1864) that he had to combat Mazzini's nationalism, and went on to say: "Inasmuch as international politics occurred in the Address, I spoke of countries, not of nationalities, and denounced Russia, not the *minores gentium*." Marx had no doubt as to the subordinate position of the national question as compared with the "labour question". But his theory is as far from ignoring national movements as heaven is from earth.

Then came 1866. Marx wrote to Engels about the "Proudhonist clique" in Paris which "declares nationalities to be an absurdity, attacks Bismarck and Garibaldi. As polemics against chauvinism their doings are useful and explicable. But as believers in Proudhon (Lafargue and Longuet, two very good friends of mine here, also belong to them), who think all Europe must and will sit quietly on their hind quarters until the gentlemen in France abolish poverty and ignorance—they are grotesque." (Letter of June 7, 1866.)

"Yesterday," Marx wrote on June 20, 1866, "there was a discussion in the International Council on the present war.... The discussion wound up, as was to be foreseen, with 'the question of nationality' in general and the attitude we take towards it.... The representatives of 'Young France' (*non-workers*) came out with the announcement that all national ties and even nations were 'antiquated prejudices'. Proudhonised Stirnerism.... The whole world waits until the

French are ripe for a social revolution.... The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue and others, who had done away with nationalities, had spoken 'French' to us, i.e., a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand. I also suggested that by the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption by the model French nation."

The conclusion that follows from all these critical remarks of Marx's is clear: the working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken *all* nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is, recognising "one's own nation" as a model nation (or, we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).*

But let us return to the question of Ireland.

Marx's position on this question is most clearly expressed in the following extracts from his letters:

"I have done my best to bring about this demonstration of the English workers in favour of Fenianism.... I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although after the separation there may come federation." This is what Marx wrote to Engels on November 2, 1867.

In his letter of November 30 of the same year he added:

"...what shall we advise the *English* workers? In my opinion they must make the *Repeal of the Union*" [Ireland with England, i.e., the separation of Ireland from England] (in short, the affair of 1783, only democratised and adapted to the conditions of the time) an article of their *pronunziamento*. This is the only legal and therefore only possible form of Irish emancipation which can be admitted in the programme of an *English* party. Experience must show later

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* Cf. also Marx's letter to Engels of June 3, 1867: "...I have learned with real pleasure from the Paris letters to *The Times* about the pro-Polish exclamations of the Parisians against Russia.... Mr. Proudhon and his little doctrinaire clique are not the French people."

whether a mere personal union can continue to subsist between the two countries....

"...What the Irish need is:

"1) Self-government and independence from England;

"2) An agrarian revolution...."

Marx attached great importance to the Irish question and delivered hour-and-a-half lectures on this subject at the German Workers' Union (letter of December 17, 1867).

In a letter dated November 20, 1868, Engels spoke of "the hatred towards the Irish found among the English workers", and almost a year later (October 24, 1869), returning to this subject, he wrote:

"*Il n'y a qu'un pas* [it is only one step] from Ireland to Russia.... Irish history shows what a misfortune it is for one nation to have subjugated another. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to plough my way through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken an other turn in England, too, but for the necessity of military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there."

Let us note, in passing, Marx's letter to Engels of August 18, 1869:

"The Polish workers in Posen have brought a strike to a victorious end with the help of their colleagues in Berlin. This struggle against Monsieur le Capital—even in the lower form of the strike—is a more serious way of getting rid of national prejudices than peace declamations from the lips of bourgeois gentlemen."

The policy on the Irish question pursued by Marx in the International may be seen from the following:

On November 18, 1869, Marx wrote to Engels that he had spoken for an hour and a quarter at the Council of the International on the question of the attitude of the British Ministry to the Irish Amnesty, and had proposed the following resolution:

"Resolved,

"that in his reply to the Irish demands for the release of the imprisoned Irish patriots Mr. Gladstone deliberately insults the Irish nation;

"that he clogs political amnesty with conditions alike degrading to the victims of misgovernment and the people they belong to;

"that having, in the teeth of his responsible position, publicly and enthusiastically cheered on the American slaveholders' rebellion, he now steps in to preach to the Irish people the doctrine of passive obedience;

"that his whole proceedings with reference to the Irish Amnesty question are the true and genuine offspring of that '*policy of conquest*', by the fiery denunciation of which Mr. Gladstone ousted his Tory rivals from office;

"that the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their Amnesty movement;

"that this resolution be communicated to all branches of, and workingmen's bodies connected with, the International Workingmen's Association in Europe and America."

On December 10, 1869, Marx wrote that his paper on the Irish question to be read at the Council of the International would be couched as follows:

"Quite apart from all phrases about 'international' and 'humane' justice for Ireland—which are taken for granted in the International Council—*it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connexion with Ireland*. And this is my fullest conviction, and for reasons which in part I can *not* tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the *New York Tribune*[191] [an American paper to which Marx contributed for a long time]. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will *never accomplish anything* until it has got rid of Ireland.... The English reaction in England had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland." (Marx's italics.)

Marx's policy on the Irish question should now be quite clear to our readers.

Marx, the "utopian", was so "unpractical" that he stood for the separation of Ireland, which half a century later has not yet been achieved.

What gave rise to Marx's policy, and was it not mistaken?

At first Marx thought that Ireland would not be liberated by the national movement of the oppressed nation, but by the working-class movement of the oppressor nation. Marx did not make an Absolute of the national movement, knowing, as he did, that only the victory of the working class can bring about the complete liberation of all nationalities. It is impossible to estimate beforehand all the possible relations between the bourgeois liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the proletarian emancipation movement of the oppressor nation (the very problem which today makes the national question in Russia so difficult).

However, it so happened that the English working class fell under the influence of the liberals for a fairly long time, became an appendage to the liberals, and by adopting a liberal-labour policy left itself leaderless. The bourgeois liberation movement in Ireland grew stronger and assumed revolutionary forms. Marx reconsidered his view and corrected it. "What a misfortune it is for a nation to have subjugated another." The English-working class will never be free until Ireland is freed from the English yoke. Reaction in England is strengthened and fostered by the enslavement of Ireland (just as reaction in Russia is fostered by her enslavement of a number of nations!).

And, in proposing in the International a resolution of sympathy with "the Irish nation", "the Irish people" (the clever L. Vl. would probably have berated poor Marx for forgetting about the class struggle!), Marx advocated the *separation* of Ireland from England, "although after the separation there may come federation".

What were the theoretical grounds for Marx's conclusion? In England the bourgeois revolution had been consummated long ago. But it had not yet been consummated in Ireland; it is being consummated only now, after the lapse of half a century, by the reforms of the English Liberals. If capitalism had been overthrown in England as quickly as Marx had at first expected, there would have been no room for a bourgeois-democratic and general national movement in Ireland. But since it had arisen, Marx advised the English workers to support it, give it a revolutionary impetus and see it through in the interests of *their own* liberty.

The economic ties between Ireland and England in the 1860s were, of course, even closer than Russia's present ties with Poland, the Ukraine, etc. The "unpracticality" and "impracticability" of the separation of Ireland (if only owing to geographical conditions and England's immense colonial power) were quite obvious. Though, in principle, an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federation, as well,* *if only* the emancipation of Ireland was achieved in a revolutionary, not reformist way, through a movement of the mass of the people of Ireland supported by the working class of England. There can be no doubt that only such a solution of the historical problem would have been in the best interests of the proletariat and most conducive to rapid social progress.

Things turned out differently. Both the Irish people and the English proletariat proved weak. Only now, through the sordid deals between the English Liberals and the Irish bourgeoisie, is the Irish problem *being solved* (the example of Ulster shows with what difficulty) through the land reform (with compensation) and Home Rule (not yet introduced). Well then? Does it follow that Marx and Engels were "utopians", that they put forward "impracticable" national demands, or that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Irish petty-bourgeois nationalists (for there is no doubt about the petty-bourgeois nature of the Fenian movement), etc.?

No. In the Irish question, too, Marx and Engels pursued a consistently proletarian policy, which really educated the masses in a spirit of democracy and socialism. Only such a policy could have saved both Ireland and England half a

* By the way, it is not difficult to see why, from a Social-Democratic point of view, the right to "self-determination" means *neither* federation *nor* autonomy (although, speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of "self-determination"). The right to federation is simply meaningless, since federation implies a bilateral contract. It goes without saying that Marxists cannot include the defence of federalism in general in their programme. As far as autonomy is concerned Marxists defend, not the "right" to autonomy, but autonomy *itself*, as a general universal principle of a democratic state with a mixed national composition, and a great variety of geographical and other conditions. Consequently, the recognition of the "right of nations to autonomy" is as absurd as that of the "right of nations to federation".

century of delay in introducing the necessary reforms, and prevented these reforms from being mutilated by the Liberals to please the reactionaries.

The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nations should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its immense *practical* importance. It serves as a warning against that "servile haste" with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to label as "utopian" the idea of altering the frontiers of states that were established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.

If the Irish and English proletariat had not accepted Marx's policy and had not made the secession of Ireland their slogan, this would have been the worst sort of opportunism, a neglect of their duties as democrats and socialists, and a concession to *English* reaction and the *English* bourgeoisie.

9. THE 1903 PROGRAMME AND ITS LIQUIDATORS

The Minutes of the 1903 Congress, at which the Programme of the Russian Marxists was adopted, have become a great rarity, and the vast majority of the active members of the working-class movement today are unacquainted with the motives underlying the various points (the more so since not all the literature relating to it enjoys the blessings of legality...). It is therefore necessary to analyse the debate that took place at the 1903 Congress on the question under discussion.

Let us state first of all that however meagre the Russian Social-Democratic literature on the "right of nations to self-determination" may be, it nevertheless shows clearly that this right has always been understood to mean the right to secession. The Semkovskys, Liebmans and Yurkeviches who doubt this and declare that § 9 is "vague", etc., do so only because of their sheer ignorance or carelessness. As far back as 1902, Plekhanov, in *Zarya*, defended "the right to self-determination" in the draft programme, and wrote that this demand, while not obligatory upon bourgeois democrats, was "obligatory upon Social-Democrats". "If we were to forget it or hesitate to advance it," Plekhanov wrote, "for fear of

offending the national prejudices of our fellow-countrymen of Great-Russian nationality, the call ... 'workers of all countries, unite!' would be a shameful lie on our lips...."[192]

This is a very apt description of the fundamental argument in favour of the point under consideration; so apt that it is not surprising that the "anythingarian" critics of our programme have been timidly avoiding it. The abandonment of this point, no matter for what motives, is *actually* a "shameful" concession to *Great-Russian* nationalism. But why Great-Russian, when it is a question of the right of *all* nations to self-determination? Because it refers to secession *from* the Great Russians. The interests of the *unity of the proletarians*, the interests of their class solidarity call for recognition of the right of *nations to secede*—that is what Plekhanov admitted twelve years ago in the words quoted above. Had our opportunists given thought to this they would probably not have talked so much nonsense about self-determination.

At the 1903 Congress, which adopted the draft programme that Plekhanov advocated, the main work was done by the *Programme Commission*. Unfortunately no Minutes of its proceedings were kept; they would have been particularly interesting on this point, for it was *only* in the Commission that the representatives of the Polish Social-Democrats, Warszawski and Hanecki, tried to defend their views and to dispute "recognition of the right to self-determination". Any reader who goes to the trouble of comparing their arguments (set forth in the speech by Warszawski and the statement by him and Hanecki, pp. 134-36 and 388-90 of the Congress Minutes) with those which Rosa Luxemburg advanced in her Polish article, which we have analysed, will find them identical.

How were these arguments treated by the Programme Commission of the Second Congress, where Plekhanov, more than anyone else, spoke against the Polish Marxists? They were mercilessly ridiculed! The absurdity of proposing to the Marxists of *Russia* that they should reject the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination was demonstrated so plainly and clearly that the Polish Marxists *did not even venture to repeat their arguments at the plenary meeting of the Congress*! They left the Congress, convinced of the

hopelessness of their case at the supreme assembly of Marxists—Great-Russian, Jewish, Georgian, and Armenian.

Needless to say, this historic episode is of very great importance to everyone seriously interested in *his own* programme. The fact that the Polish Marxists' arguments were completely defeated at the Programme Commission of the Congress, and that the Polish Marxists gave up the attempt to defend their views at the plenary meeting of the Congress is very significant. No wonder Rosa Luxemburg maintained a "modest" silence about it in her article in 1908—the recollection of the Congress must have been too unpleasant! She also kept quiet about the ridiculously inept proposal made by Warszawski and Hanecki in 1903, on behalf of all Polish Marxists, to "amend" §9 of the Programme, a proposal which neither Rosa Luxemburg nor the other Polish Social-Democrats have ventured (or will ever venture) to repeat.

But although Rosa Luxemburg, concealing her defeat in 1903, has maintained silence over these facts, those who take an interest in the history of their Party will make it their business to ascertain them and give thought to their significance.

On leaving the 1903 Congress, Rosa Luxemburg's friends submitted the following statement:

> "We propose that Clause 7 [now Clause 9] of the draft programme read as follows: §7. *Institutions guaranteeing full freedom of cultural development to all nations incorporated in the state*." (P. 390 of the Minutes.)

Thus, the Polish Marxists at that time put forward views on the national question that were so vague that *instead of* self-determination they practically proposed the notorious "cultural-national autonomy", only under another name!

This sounds almost incredible, but unfortunately it is a fact. At the Congress itself, attended though it was by five Bundists with five votes and three Caucasians with six votes, without counting Kostrov's consultative voice, *not a single* vote was cast for the *rejection* of the clause about self-determination. Three votes were cast for the proposal to add "cultural-national autonomy" to this clause (in favour of Goldblatt's formula: "the establishment of institutions guaranteeing the nations full freedom of cultural develop-

ment") and four votes for Lieber's formula ("the right of nations to freedom in their cultural development").

Now that a Russian liberal party—the Constitutional-Democratic Party—has appeared on the scene, we know that in *its* programme the political self-determination of nations has been replaced by "cultural self-determination". Rosa Luxemburg's Polish friends, therefore, were "*combating*" the nationalism of the P.S.P., and did it so successfully that they proposed the substitution of a *liberal* programme for the Marxist programme! And in the same breath they accused our programme of being opportunist; no wonder this accusation was received with laughter by the Programme Commission of the Second Congress!

How was "self-determination" understood by the delegates to the Second Congress; of whom, as we have seen, *not one* was opposed to "self-determination of nations"?

The following three extracts from the Minutes provide the answer:

"*Martynov* is of the opinion that the term 'self-determination' should not be given a broad interpretation; it merely means the right of a nation to establish itself as a separate polity, not regional self-government" (p. 171). Martynov was a member of the Programme Commission, in which the arguments of Rosa Luxemburg's friends were repudiated and ridiculed. Martynov was then an Economist in his views, and a violent opponent of *Iskra*; had he expressed an opinion that was not shared by the majority of the Programme Commission he would certainly have been repudiated.

Bundist Goldblatt was the first to speak when the Congress, after the Commission had finished its work, discussed §8 (the present Clause 9) of the Programme.

He said:

"No objections can be raised to the 'right to self-determination'. When a nation is fighting for independence, that should not be opposed. If Poland refuses to enter into lawful marriage with Russia, she should not be interfered with, as Plekhanov put it. I agree with this opinion within these limits" (pp. 175-76).

Plekhanov had not spoken on this subject at all at the plenary meeting of the Congress. Goldblatt was referring to what Plekhanov had said at the Programme Commission, where the "right to self-determination" had been explained

in a simple yet detailed manner to mean the right to secession. Lieber, who spoke after Goldblatt, remarked:

> "Of course, if any nationality finds that it cannot live within the frontiers of Russia, the Party will not place any obstacles in Its way" (p. 176).

The reader will see that at the Second Congress of the Party, which adopted the programme, it was unanimously understood that self-determination meant "only" the right to secession. Even the Bundists grasped this truth at the time, and it is only in our own deplorable times of continued counter-revolution and all sorts of "apostasy" that we can find people who, bold in their ignorance, declare that the programme is "vague". But before devoting time to these sorry would-be Social-Democrats, let us first finish with the attitude of the Poles to the programme.

They came to the Second Congress (1903) declaring that unity was necessary and imperative. But they left the Congress after their "reverses" in the Programme Commission, and their *last word* was a written statement, printed in the Minutes of the Congress, containing the above-mentioned proposal to *substitute* cultural-national autonomy for self-determination.

In 1906 the Polish Marxists joined the Party; *neither* upon joining *nor* afterwards (at the Congress of 1907, the conferences of 1907 and 1908, or the plenum of 1910) *did they introduce* a single proposal to amend § 9 of the Russian Programme!

That is a fact.

And, despite all utterances and assurances, this fact definitely proves that Rosa Luxemburg's friends regarded the question as having been settled by the debate at the Programme Commission of the Second Congress, as well as by the decision of that Congress, and that they tacitly acknowledged their mistake and corrected it by joining the Party in 1906, after they had left the Congress in 1903, without a single attempt to raise the question of amending § 9 of the Programme through *Party* channels.

Rosa Luxemburg's article appeared over her signature in 1908—of course, it never entered anyone's head to deny Party publicists the right to criticise the programme—and, *since*

the writing of this article, *not a single* official body of the Polish Marxists has raised the question of revising §9.

Trotsky was therefore rendering a great disservice to certain admirers of Rosa Luxemburg when he wrote, on behalf of the editors of *Borba*, in issue No. 2 of that publication (March 1914):

> "The Polish Marxists consider that 'the right to national self-determination' is entirely devoid of political content and should be deleted from the programme" (p. 25).

The obliging Trotsky is more dangerous than an enemy! Trotsky could produce *no* proof, except "private conversations" (i.e., simply gossip, on which Trotsky always subsists), for classifying "Polish Marxists" in general as supporters of every article by Rosa Luxemburg. Trotsky presented the "Polish Marxists" as people devoid of honour and conscience, incapable of respecting even their own convictions and the programme of their Party. How obliging Trotsky is!

When, in 1903, the representatives of the Polish Marxists walked out of the Second Congress *over* the right to self-determination, Trotsky could have said *at the time* that they regarded this right as devoid of content and subject to deletion from the programme.

But after that the Polish Marxists *joined* the Party whose programme this was, and they have never introduced a motion to amend it.*

Why did Trotsky withhold these facts from the readers of his journal? Only because it pays him to speculate on fomenting differences between the Polish and the Russian opponents of liquidationism and to deceive the Russian workers on the question of the programme.

Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his

* We are informed that the Polish Marxists attended the Summer Conference of the Russian Marxists in 1913 with *only* a consultative voice and did not vote at all on the right to self-determination (secession), declaring their opposition to this right in general. Of course, they had a perfect right to act the way they did, and, as hitherto, to agitate in Poland against secession. But this is not quite what Trotsky said; for the Polish Marxists did not demand the "deletion" of §9 from the programme".

way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion and desert one side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the liquidators. And these gentlemen do not stand on ceremony where the Party is concerned.

Listen to the Bundist Liebman.

"When, fifteen years ago," this gentleman writes, "the Russian Social-Democrats included the point about the right of every nationality to 'self-determination' in their programme, everyone [!] asked himself: What does this fashionable [!] term really mean? No answer was forthcoming [!]. This word was left [!] wrapped in mist. And indeed, at the time, it was difficult to dispel that mist. The moment had not come when this point could be made concrete—it was said—so let it remain wrapped in mist [!] for the time being and practice will show what content should be put into it."

Isn't it magnificent, the way this "ragamuffin"[193] mocks at the Party programme?

And why does he mock at it?

Because he is an absolute ignoramus, who has never learnt anything or even read any Party history, but merely happened to land in liquidationist circles where going about in the nude is considered the "right" thing to do as far as knowledge of the Party and everything it stands for is concerned.

Pomyalovsky's seminary student boasts of having "spat into a barrel of sauerkraut".[194] The Bundist gentlemen have gone one better. They let the Liebmans loose to spit publicly into their own barrel. What do the Liebmans care about the fact that the International Congress has passed a decision, that at the Congress of their own Party two representatives of their own Bund proved that they were quite able (and what "severe" critics and determined enemies of *Iskra* they were!) to understand the meaning of "self-determination" and were even in agreement with it? And will it not be easier to liquidate the Party if the "Party publicists" (no jokes, please!) treat its history and programme after the fashion of the seminary student?

Here is a second "ragamuffin", Mr. Yurkevich of *Dzvin*. Mr. Yurkevich must have had the Minutes of the Second Congress before him, because he quotes Plekhanov, as repeated by Goldblatt, and shows that he is aware of the fact that self-determination can only mean the right to secession. This, however, does not prevent him from spreading slander

about the Russian Marxists among the Ukrainian petty bourgeoisie, alleging that they stand for the "state integrity" of Russia. (No. 7-8, 1913, p. 83, etc.) Of course, the Yurkeviches could not have invented a better method than such slander to alienate the Ukrainian democrats from the Great-Russian democrats. And such alienation is in line with the entire policy of the group of *Dzvin* publicists who advocate the *separation* of the Ukrainian workers *in a special* national organisation!*

It is quite appropriate, of course, that a group of nationalist philistines, who are engaged in splitting the ranks of the proletariat—and objectively this is the role of *Dzvin*—should disseminate such hopeless confusion on the national question. Needless to say, the Yurkeviches and Liebmans, who are "terribly" offended when they are called "near-Party men", do not say a word, not a single word, as to how *they* would like the problem of the right to secede to be settled in the programme.

But here is the third and principal "ragamuffin", Mr. Semkovsky, who, addressing a Great-Russian audience through the columns of a liquidationist newspaper, lashes at § 9 of the Programme and at the same time declares that "for certain reasons he does not approve of the proposal" to delete this clause!

This is incredible, but it is a fact.

In August 1912, the liquidators' conference raised the national question officially. For eighteen months not a single article has appeared on the question of § 9, except the one written by Mr. Semkovsky. And in this article the author *repudiates* the programme, "without approving", however, "for *certain* reasons" (is this a secrecy disease?) the proposal to amend it! We may be sure that it would be difficult to find anywhere in the world similar examples of opportunism, or even worse—renunciation of the Party, and a desire to liquidate it.

A single example will suffice to show what Semkovsky's arguments are like:

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* See particularly Mr. Yurkevich's preface to Mr. Levinsky's book (written in Ukrainian) *Outline of the Development of the Ukrainian Working-Class Movement in Galicia*, Kiev, 1914.

"What are we to do," he writes, "if the Polish proletariat wants to fight side by side with the proletariat of all Russia within the framework of a single state, while the reactionary classes of Polish society, on the contrary, want to separate Poland from Russia and obtain a majority of votes in favour of secession by referendum? Should we, Russian Social-Democrats in the central parliament, vote together with our Polish comrades *against* secession, or—in order not to violate the 'right to self-determination'—vote *for* secession?" (*Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* No. 71.)

From this it is evident that Mr. Semkovsky does not even understand the *point at issue*! It did not occur to him that the right to secession presupposes the settlement of the question by a parliament (Diet, referendum, etc.) of the *seceding* region, *not* by a central parliament.

The childish perplexity over the question "What are we to do", if under democracy the majority are for reaction, serves to screen the real and live issue when *both* the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins consider the very idea of secession criminal! Perhaps the proletarians of *all* Russia ought not to fight the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins today, but should by-pass them and fight the reactionary classes of Poland!

Such is the sheer rubbish published in the liquidators' organ of which Mr. L. Martov is one of the ideological leaders, the selfsame L. Martov who drafted the programme and spoke in favour of its adoption in 1903, and even subsequently wrote in favour of the right to secede. Apparently L. Martov is now arguing according to the rule:

No clever man is needed there;
Better send Read,
And I shall wait and see.[195]

He sends Read-Semkovsky along and allows our programme to be distorted and endlessly muddled up in a daily paper whose new readers are unacquainted with it!

Yes. Liquidationism has gone a long way—there are even very many prominent ex-Social-Democrats who have not a trace of Party spirit left in them.

Rosa Luxemburg cannot, of course, be classed with the Liebmans, Yurkeviches and Semkovskys, but the fact that it was this kind of people who seized upon her error shows with particular clarity the opportunism she has lapsed into.

10. CONCLUSION

To sum up.

As far as the theory of Marxism in general is concerned, the question of the right to self-determination presents no difficulty. No one can seriously question the London resolution of 1896, or the fact that self-determination implies only the right to secede, or that the formation of independent national states is the tendency in all bourgeois-democratic revolutions.

A difficulty is to some extent created by the fact that in Russia the proletariat of both the oppressed and oppressor nations are fighting, and must fight, side by side. The task is to preserve the unity of the proletariat's class struggle for socialism, and to resist all bourgeois and Black-Hundred nationalist influences. Where the oppressed nations are concerned, the separate organisation of the proletariat as an independent party sometimes leads to such a bitter struggle against local nationalism that the perspective becomes distorted and the nationalism of the oppressor nation is lost sight of.

But this distortion of perspective cannot last long. The experience of the joint struggle waged by the proletarians of various nations has demonstrated all too clearly that we must formulate political issues from the all-Russia, not the "Cracow" point of view. And in all-Russia politics it is the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins who are in the saddle. Their ideas predominate, and their persecution of non-Russians for "separatism", for *thinking* about secession, is being preached and practised in the Duma, in the schools, in the churches, in the barracks, and in hundreds and thousands of newspapers. It is this Great-Russian nationalist poison that is polluting the entire all-Russia political atmosphere. This is the misfortune of one nation, which, by subjugating other nations, is strengthening reaction throughout Russia. The memories of 1849 and 1863 form a living political tradition, which, unless great storms arise, threatens to hamper every democratic and *especially* every Social-Democratic movement for decades to come.

There can be no doubt that however natural the point of view of certain Marxists belonging to the oppressed nations (whose "misfortune" is sometimes that the masses of the

population are blinded by the idea of their "own" national liberation) may appear at times, *in reality* the objective alignment of class forces in Russia makes refusal to advocate the right to self-determination tantamount to the worst opportunism, to the infection of the proletariat with the ideas of the Kokoshkins. And these ideas are, essentially, the ideas and the policy of the Purishkeviches.

Therefore, although Rosa Luxemburg's point of view could at first have been excused as being specifically Polish, "Cracow" narrow-mindedness,* it is inexcusable today, when nationalism and, above all, governmental Great-Russian nationalism, has everywhere gained ground, and when policy is being shaped by this *Great-Russian nationalism*. In actual fact, it is being seized upon by the opportunists of *all* nations, who fight shy of the idea of "storms" and "leaps", believe that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is over, and follow in the wake of the liberalism of the Kokoshkins.

Like any other nationalism, Great-Russian nationalism passes through various phases, according to the classes that are dominant in the bourgeois country at any given time. Up to 1905, we almost exclusively knew national-reactionaries. After the revolution, *national-liberals* arose in our country.

In our country this is virtually the stand adopted both by the Octobrists and by the Cadets (Kokoshkin), i.e., by the whole of the present-day bourgeoisie.

Great-Russian national-democrats will *inevitably* appear later on. Mr. Peshekhonov, one of the founders of the "Popular Socialist" Party, already expressed this point of view (in the issue of *Russkoye Bogatstvo* for August 1906) when he called for caution in regard to the peasants' nationalist prejudices. However much others may slander us Bolsheviks and accuse us of "idealising" the peasant, we always

* It is not difficult to understand that the recognition by the Marxists of the *whole of Russia*, and first and foremost by the Great Russians, of the *right* of nations to secede in no way precludes *agitation* against secession by Marxists of a particular *oppressed* nation, just as the recognition of the right to divorce does not preclude agitation against divorce in a particular case. We think, therefore, that there will be an inevitable increase in the number of Polish Marxists who laugh at the non-existent "contradiction" now being "encouraged" by Semkovsky and Trotsky.

have made and always will make a clear distinction between peasant intelligence and peasant prejudice, between peasant strivings for democracy and opposition to Purishkevich, and the peasant desire to make peace with the priest and the landlord.

Even now, and probably for a fairly long time to come, proletarian democracy must reckon with the nationalism of the Great-Russian peasants (not with the object of making concessions to it, but in order to combat it).* The awakening of nationalism among the oppressed nations, which became so pronounced after 1905 (let us recall, say, the group of "Federalist-Autonomists" in the First Duma, the growth of the Ukrainian movement, of the Moslem movement, etc.), will inevitably lead to greater nationalism among the Great-Russian petty bourgeoisie in town and countryside. The slower the democratisation of Russia, the more persistent, brutal and bitter will be the national persecution and bickering among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. The particularly reactionary nature of the Russian Purishkeviches will simultaneously give rise to (and strengthen) "separatist" tendencies among the various oppressed nationalities, which sometimes enjoy far greater freedom in neighbouring states.

In this situation, the proletariat of Russia is faced with a twofold or, rather, a two-sided task: to combat nationalism of every kind, above all, Great-Russian nationalism; to recognise, not only fully equal rights for all nations in

* It would be interesting to trace the changes that take place in Polish nationalism, for example, in the process of its transformation from gentry nationalism into bourgeois nationalism, and then into peasant nationalism. In his book *Das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staat* (*The Polish Community in the Prussian State*; there is a Russian translation), Ludwig Bernhard, who shares the view of a German Kokoshkin, describes a very typical phenomenon: the formation of a sort of "peasant republic" by the Poles in Germany in the form of a close alliance of the various co-operatives and other associations of *Polish* peasants in their struggle for nationality, religion, and "Polish" land. German oppression has welded the Poles together and segregated them, after first awakening the nationalism of the gentry, then of the bourgeoisie, and finally of the peasant masses (especially after the campaign the Germans launched in 1873 against the use of the Polish language in schools). Things are moving in the same direction in Russia, and not only with regard to Poland.

general, but also equality of rights as regards polity, i.e., the right of nations to self-determination, to secession. And at the same time, it is their task, in the interests of a successful struggle against all and every kind of nationalism among all nations, to preserve the unity of the proletarian struggle and the proletarian organisations, amalgamating these organisations into a close-knit international association, despite bourgeois strivings for national exclusiveness.

Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers.

This article had been set up when I received No. 3 of *Nasha Rabochaya Gazeta*, in which Mr. Vl. Kosovsky writes the following about the recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination:

"Taken mechanically from the resolution of the First Congress of the Party (1898), which in turn had borrowed it from the decisions of international socialist congresses, it was given, as is evident from the debate, the same meaning at the 1903 Congress as was ascribed to it by the Socialist International, i.e., political self-determination, the self-determination of nations in the field of political independence. Thus the formula: national self-determination, which implies the right to territorial separation, does not in any way affect the question of how national relations *within* a given state organism should be regulated for nationalities that cannot or have no desire to leave the existing state."

It is evident from this that Mr. Vl. Kosovsky has seen the Minutes of the Second Congress of 1903 and understands perfectly well the real (and only) meaning of the term self-determination. Compare this with the fact that the editors of the Bund newspaper *Zeit* let Mr. Liebman loose to scoff at the programme and to declare that it is vague! Queer "party" ethics among these Bundists.... The Lord alone knows why Kosovsky should declare that the Congress took over the principle of self-determination *mechanically*. Some people want to "object", but how, why, and for what reason—they do not know.